

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, June 28, 1895, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell. 10 rue Nitot, Paris. June 28th 1895. My dear Mrs. Bell:

Not so very long now, and you and Mr. Bell will celebrate the fifty-first anniversary of your wedding day. A year ago how near together we all were, today how far apart! I wish we were nearer that we might run down to the beach and give you our congratulations. We ought to, for every year adds to our joy in having you both with us. I hope that many returns are in store for you and us, and that perhaps yet another may be spent at Beinn Bhreagh.

I am very glad so far that we came, and think that I have done the best thing for the children. They are well and seem to enjoy everything very much. As for their becoming Catholics from living in a Convent I think there is less chance of it now than before we came. Elsie finds little in the gorgeous ceremonies to attract her, Daisy I think feels their great beauty more, but is not attracted by the more she knows of the dogmas underlying them. She enjoys the music and never seems happier than when sitting in the lovely little chapel listening to the exquisite voice of one of the nuns up in the organ loft. This morning twenty-one of the young Convent maidens partook of Holy Communion for the first time and we were invited over to see them. We had to be up betimes, for the ceremony took place at eight. The celebratants cannot break their fast until after service, so naturally it is as early as convenient. I wish you could have seen what a pretty picture the white-robed girls made kneeling there in the lovely pure white chapel among tall lighted tapers. On either side to right and left knelt their teachers and guardians, the quiet-faced nuns in their long robes of purple and white, and we all felt the soft glow of light passing through stained glass and of the candles burning yellow among the kneeling girls and high up

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among the white flowers on the altar. Very pretty too was it to see the young girls, the exhortation of the Bishop over, rise from their seats and with bent heads and folded hands go quietly up to the communion table, receive on their knees the sacred food, and then drawing their white veils down over their faces walk slowly back to their seats. There was a little — I don't know whether you could call it aftermath to all this religious ceremony, at lunch when we had some especially good things such as paté de foies gras and ice-cream which we heard were the remains of the bishop's breakfast! The good nuns although their vows forbid their sharing the luxuries of the table, had no mind to starve their honored guest, who had come all the way from Southern France to perform the ceremony, and so gave him a plentiful breakfast. He preached to the children again in the afternoon when they were confirmed, and afterwards walked in procession around the garden. I was so sorry we did not see this part of the ceremony of First Communion, but we did not know of it until we had promised to go to Sevres with Mrs. Mauro. I was especially sorry for our visit to Sevres was unsatisfactory, we were hot and tired, and hadn't provided ourselves with the necessary card of admission to the workshops, so we only saw the completed works and the beginning of the clay shapes on the potter's wheel.

The children are getting on fairly with their mastery of French. I am impatient and wish they would get ahead faster, and yet